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Russell.

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## MR. RUSSELL'S ORATION.



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AN

# ORATION

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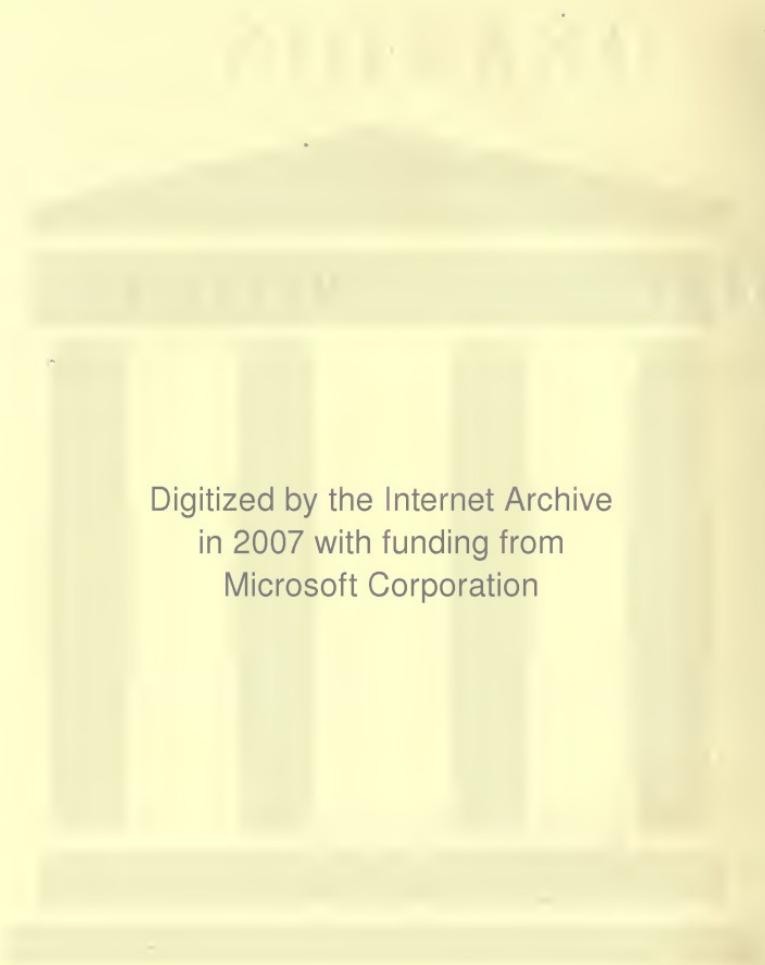
JULY 4, 1851.

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BY CHAS. THEO. RUSSELL.

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## CITY OF BOSTON.

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*In the Board of Mayor and Aldermen, July 7th, 1851.*

*Ordered,* That the thanks of the City Council, be presented to the Honorable Charles Theodore Russell, for the able, eloquent, and very interesting Oration, delivered by him, before the Municipal Authorities, at the recent celebration of the Declaration of American Independence; and that he be requested to furnish a copy of said Oration for publication.

Passed.

Sent down for concurrence.

JOHN P. BIGELOW, *Mayor.*

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*In Common Council, July 10th, 1851.*

Passed in concurrence.

FRANCIS BRINLEY, *President.*

A true Copy.

Attest:

S. F. McCLEARY, *City Clerk.*



## ORATION.

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THREE quarters of a century have elapsed, since the Signers of the Declaration, to which you have just listened, more conscious of the solemn responsibility assumed, and the self-evident truths proclaimed, than of the stupendous results to follow, set their names, "where all nations should behold" them, and "where all time should not efface" them. They met that responsibility. They vindicated and sustained those truths against arbitrary power and popular anarchy. And we, to-day, with their memory fresh amongst us, see results, their most sanguine hopes never portrayed, and their loftiest and farthest visions never revealed. The two millions whose voice they, "in General Congress assembled," uttered, have become a great people. The thirteen united colonies, they, by that voice, declared were, "and of right ought to be, Free and Independent States" are such, and yet in number and territory the smaller part of that powerful confederacy into which, happily, they have entered, and from which no arts can seduce, no conflicts of extreme opinion drive them.

The citizen of the United States to-day, finds himself one of a population of more than twenty-three millions, possessing a country extending from Ocean to Ocean, and

from the Southern Cape of Florida to the Lake of the Woods. This vast territory, but sparsely inhabited as yet, and capable of sustaining hundreds of millions, he sees, by the progress of science, and the application of art, reduced to the compactness of the original thirteen States, and embraced in a republic, peculiarly organized, and susceptible of further extension, without losing its character or strength. Within it are an active and energetic people, not homogeneous, but with the Anglo Saxon element largely predominant, and yet in the aggregate, combining various races and nations, deeply impressed with sentiments of liberty, and united in a consolidated and potent free government. History informs him that little more than three centuries and a half have elapsed, since the continent upon which he stands was revealed to Christendom; less than two and a half, since that part he calls his country, so powerful in the present, so stupendous in the future, received its first civilized inhabitant; while the memories of to-day remind him, that the century is only three-quarters completed, since this same country assumed "among the powers of the earth, that separate and equal station, to which the laws of nature and of nature's God" entitled it.

Standing beside this swelling flood of our country's prosperity, it would be a grateful task to trace it, as the explorers of the great father of rivers traced that, to its source, a silver streamlet, gushing from its crystal fountain, and there like them reverently to kneel, and drink of its limpid waters. More grateful still to turn from the fountain itself to Him, who bade its waters flow, and has ever guided their ceaseless and accumulating current. We

have called this day the Sabbath of Freedom, and in its services religion and liberty meet together and embrace. From those week day discussions, that divide and distract us, it is "a day of sacred rest." It assembles us for general joy, but it has its high and solemn thoughts, and its devout and fervent thanksgivings. We gaze to-day, upon those stars, the emblems of our national existence, each in its orbit moving around, and receiving the gladsome light and genial warmth of the central sun, and without voice, like the silent stars of heaven, in their courses, they proclaim their divine Author. Beneath the beams of this morning's sun thousands upon thousands have reverently bowed before that great Author, and with sincere lips and grateful hearts acknowledged His protecting providence over, and blessed His wisdom and goodness for, their free and united country. In this they have only imitated the great actors in the events of that country's history. They emphatically recognized the protection and guidance of God. Not only did the early settlers, who in the fervor of religious faith, professed to go forth, like the patriarch of old, seeking a far country by divine guidance; not only did they, who, with similar faith, led the preparatory pilgrimage of the wilderness, but equally those, who have hallowed this day, and who beheld the waters restrained, as, with the people, they bore through them the sacred ark of liberty, not more for their chosen followers, than for all mankind, entrusted to their hands. Franklin, in a speech before the Convention, in 1787, says, "All of us, who were engaged in the struggle, must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favor." And he adds after-

wards, “I have lived, Sir, a long time, and the longer I live, the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, *that God governs in the affairs of men*, and if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, Sir, in the sacred writings that ‘except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it.’ I firmly believe this; and I also believe, that without his concurring aid, we shall succeed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel.” Washington, in his first inaugural address, declares, “No people can be bound to acknowledge and adore the invisible hand, which conducts the affairs of men, more than the people of the United States. Every step by which they have advanced to the character of an independent nation, seems to have been distinguished by some token of providential agency.” Jefferson, in a similar official document, asserts that the same great Being “led our fathers as Israel of old, from their native land, and planted them in a country flowing with all the necessaries and comforts of life,” and “covered our infancy with His providence, and our riper years with His wisdom and power.” The same profound truth controlled the hearts of the New England patriots, and they ever moved under its supporting inspiration.

Deeply impressed with the belief, held by the fathers, that a series of providential agencies have created and established this, our Israel of republicanism, not indeed miraculous, but as easily traced, as those that originated the Israel of God, I ask your attention to a consideration of some of those agencies,—and the legitimate conclusions that follow. I do this in no spirit of exuberant patriot-

ism, or national glorification, but in accordance with that vote of the town of Boston in 1783, which declares, that this day "shall be constantly celebrated by the delivery of a Public Oration," "in which the Orator shall consider the *feelings, manners and principles*, which led to this great national event, as well as the important and *happy effects*, whether general or domestic, which already have, and will continue to flow from this auspicious epoch." I do it, because I believe such a consideration will tend to dispel fears for the safety of our Union, and assure us that there is for our country "an anchor both sure and steadfast" amid whatever tempest may assail it. It will teach us that the ultimate purpose of our government is not merely the reform of this or that institution, the correction of this or that evil within it, nor even the protection of its own citizens, but the enfranchisement of man. It will tell us that our Union has been raised up by Providence not simply to be prostrated by madness or folly, but for its great mission to the human race ; and that in calculating its value and duration, in weighing evils and institutions against it, we must regard it from this transcendent point of view.

The long reservation and timely discovery of the country, the peculiar period and character of its colonization, the long, marked, but unconscious preparation for independence, war, and union, the final formation of the Constitution, and the vast extensions of our territory under it, pre-eminently illustrate and confirm the truth I have asserted. For fifteen centuries after the christian era, God kept this great country locked up from the knowl-

edge of civilized man. During all this period he suffered no wind to waft, no wave to drift, one noxious seed to its virgin soil. An ocean rolled between it and the old world, and darkness rested upon the face of that ocean. Meantime the successive occurrences of this old world were slowly and painfully germinating that seed, which, in after times, deposited in the new, was to become the greatest of trees, whose fruits should be for the healing of the nations, and its branches their shelter and defence. Christianity, by gradual, but effective steps, moulded and subjected to itself those elements of strength and power, which were its chosen instruments. It “triumphed over the learned and luxurious citizens of the Roman empire,” and brought to its support their refinement, learning and law. Rising upon their ruin, it advanced to sterner conflicts, and achieved its conquest over the barbarians of Scythia and Germany, “who subverted the empire and embraced the religion of the Romans.” It yielded to barbarism only to displace its sceptre, and incorporate itself with a more hardy and vigorous race. Secure of its new subjects, it encountered the advancing hosts of Islam, and again triumphed in that long doubtful contest, where Saracen and Christian strove for ascendancy over the destinies of our race, and the hopes of civilization hung tremulous on the fortunes of Charles Martel. And it finally entrenched itself in a church, which assumed confessedly large and dangerous powers, but necessary to its mission as mediator between people and sovereign, and as the guardian and transmitter of religion, learning and civilization from early to after ages.

During this period the varied elements out of which modern civilization rose, emerged from chaos, approached struggled, compromised and amalgamated. The darkness that settled upon this era of conflict and formation, lifted up only long after beneath the gladsome light of a truer learning, and the purer beams of the sun of righteousness.

Suppose now that America had been discovered, not in the times of Columbus, but in those of Constantine, or in the later and better era of Charlemagne or Alfred the Great. Or suppose it to have been open just after the time the Northmen claim to have discovered it, to that irruption, the first crusades poured from Europe upon Asia. What would have been the result to our race ? With mediæval feudalism, monarchy, and kindred institutions, transferred to the banks of the Mississippi, the Ohio, and the Hudson, why should not liberty to-day be in unequal and ceaseless struggle with them, as she is on the banks of the Tiber, the Rhine, the Seine, and the Danube ? Of what vast consequence, in this period of struggle and combination of error, darkness and superstition, that our country should be shut up from the reach of civilized man !

And so it was. Science and discovery awaited the slow progress of humanity. Meantime those "three powerful spirits," as Hallam says, "which have from time to time moved over the face of the waters, and given a predominant impulse to the moral sentiments and energies of mankind;" "the spirits of liberty, of religion, and of honor," were making their rapid advances. Commerce and

the useful arts wrought out their great results in the Italian Cities and Hanse Towns. Free cities sprung up all over Europe. Constitutional or parliamentary assemblies obtained a potential existence in England, France and Germany. The bold barons at Runymede extorted the Magna Charta from King John. The rudiments of those great principles, since more fully developed, and now forever fixed in the British Constitution, were successfully asserted. The powers of the church reached their culminating point. The Waldenses arose in Spain, Lombardy, Germany, and Flanders ; the Hussites in Bohemia ; the Lollards in England. Feudalism yielded to a combination of modifying causes, and chivalry tempered with its meliorating influence the rougher elements of a reforming spirit. The mariner's compass rendered the ocean no longer trackless. And, a crowning triumph in the series, the printing press, signalized the middle of the 15th century, by the most important discovery, recorded in the annals of mankind.

In this brilliant dawn of the opening day, the caravels of Columbus touched its shores, and revealed the hidden continent. Cabot followed with the English discoveries. And yet with this first grand preliminary accomplished, the foundation of our republic was not laid for a century. Society, had not reached the best point to throw off republican colonies ;—and the Spaniards were anything but appropriate founders of christian commonwealths. The English voyages, at this time, were necessary, in the language of John Cabot's patent, “to affix the banners of England to the Continent,” and found a title over Spain.

While the conquest of Mexico and Peru, by the Spaniards, was among the potent causes, which brought European society to its advanced state, at the date of the North American colonization. For *this* it owes, in no small degree, to the prodigious start it took, consequent upon the influx of the precious metals from Spanish America. The occupation of this same country, too, by the subjects of Ferdinand and Isabella, shut out the possibility of its settlement by the Protestant colonies of the United States. Had these lands become the home of our fathers, their mineral wealth would have attracted to the infant colonies the eye of the parent government too vigilantly, to have allowed a republican growth for an instant. They ultimately escaped this vigilance in the wilderness to which they came, sheltered by poverty and obscurity, till strong enough to brook and defy it.

The French, shortly after, discovered and occupied the regions north of us, an event, that in after years, exerted a most striking influence on the fate of our republic, in its struggle with England.

Meantime our own country patiently awaited its possessors,—while the vast moral and civil commotions of Europe were eliminating and preparing them for their work. It was at this time the human mind began with increased vigor to throw off its thraldom, and the conscience to assert its high and holy prerogative. Political enfranchisement succeeded the emancipation of knowledge, and the popular mind rallied, with undying energy, around the great ideas of human progress and destiny then developed. Just after the discovery of America,

Luther began the reformation, and with his coadjutors and successors secured its triumph in the hearts of the people. The popular hand grasped the Bible in the vernacular tongue. The right of private judgment vindicated itself alike against Catholic and Protestant persecution. The Puritans emerged into notice and consequence in England. The Huguenots, with Coligni and Conde, struggled for the throne itself in France. The United Provinces established their Commonwealth, and a refuge for the persecuted. The great Genevan divine hurled a thunderbolt at the doctrine of passive obedience, in teaching that it was lawful for Christians, under some circumstances, to resist their rulers. The contemporary reigns of Elizabeth in England, and Henry 4th in France, were just closing. The age had arrived capable of producing Shakspeare and Milton, Bacon and Descartes. European society was prepared for its contribution to the new republic, and it made it.

The colonists started from a point in civilization the nations had been sixteen centuries in reaching. They came to a country possessed, but not occupied, by a race, whose faintly heard foot falls, receding towards the Western Ocean, remind us to-day of their mournful and nearly accomplished destiny. They came from no single nation nor sect, to no one point, and with no common aim. They were all unconscious of the great purposes they were fulfilling. The Huguenots landed in Florida, but only to be massacred and succeeded by the Spaniards. The Cavaliers led by commerce and adventure settled in Virginia. The Puritans, seeking freedom to worship

God, parted from the old world with the simple and sublime charge of Robinson, and disembarked in the new under the precious compact of the May Flower. The Dutch, a colony of hunters and Indian traders, seized upon the outlet of the Hudson, and in the sagacity of trade, founded a commercial emporium. The Catholics, under the mild and tolerant Baltimore, settled about the Chesapeake ; the Swedes on the banks of the Delaware. A multitude, variant and mixed, careless of sects, without ministers, churches or court houses, founded North Carolina. English cavaliers and Scotch Presbyterians, Irish and Dutch, but more than all, Huguenots, mingled and colonized South Carolina. The Quakers, with some infusions from other sources, planted New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Single sects and nations colonized single commonwealths, but no *one* the republic. Into this, French, English, Dutch, Spanish, Swede and German poured their infusions. Roundhead and Cavalier, Puritan and Episcopalian, Lutheran and Calvinist, Quaker and Catholic, all contributed to its foundation. And this intermingling of nations and religions in our country has never ceased. While, therefore, the religious and Anglo Saxon element entered largely into its formation, these diversities of race and sect established with its foundation, a broad civil and religious toleration, that has grown with its growth, and strengthened with its strength. In these mixed races, and diverse religions, settled under every variety of climate and circumstance, were the elements out of which has arisen the fair fabric we behold, of an American race and an American Union.

Of this indestructible fabric, in all its strength and symmetry, our fathers for a century and a half were the unconscious artificers. No man respects more than I do, their character, or appreciates more their astonishing sagacity. Still history compels us to say, they were unaware of the greatness of the work they were accomplishing. Their true merit is that they were faithful to all the pregnant exigencies that surrounded them, and the great Architect so shaped these exigencies, that to meet them, foundations must be laid broad and deep enough for the most perfect structure of human liberty. Down to the time of the revolution, at least, our ancestors had no conception of our present government. And yet Providence, by an unbroken series of causes, which we can now distinctly trace, was silently evolving it. Occasionally the uniform tendency of events may have revealed glimpses of it to some mind, but in the main they wrought faithfully in the present, unconscious how much beyond itself, that present had wrapped within it.

The most perfect form of free government is that where power is rightly divided between separate communities, and a federal head. To such, the character of our colonization, and all our subsequent history directly conducted. Diversities of religion, race, and temperament, of time, mode, and purpose of settlement, controlled and contracted royal grants, and founded separate Commonwealths. While there were never wanting harmonies and general interests tending to a great confederacy. The centrifugal and centripetal forces, which sustain our Union, and whose slightest disturbance it so sensitively

feels, were thus early in operation, although it required more than a century for their adjustment.

The Colonists brought with them the principles of liberty. The "wise and salutary neglect" of the parent nation, suffered them to grow and flourish, while the occurrences in England, which induced this neglect, gave them powerful impulse. Hampden and Cromwell, struggling for English liberty, and discouraged, were providentially prevented from making the new world their home. Their battles for American Freedom, like those of Burke and Chatham, long after, were to be fought on English soil. While the infant colonies escaped being the immediate theatre of the Protector's later ambition, to reap the benefits of his struggle and ascendancy.

Meantime there began a course of events and influences in the colonies, preparatory to the final vindication and embodiment of these principles in our present government. Various causes led to early emigration from colony to colony, and particularly from New England to the southern and middle colonies. Religious sympathy attached portions of one community to another. Quaker sympathized with Quaker, and Puritan with Puritan, wherever each was. Thus was opened frequent intercourse and communication. The common allegiance to the mother country held the family of colonies together in their infancy and growth, until those strong ties were formed, which have so effectually operated in their manhood. The constant Indian wars were the rude and forming schools of colonial union and military organization. But more especially the French War subserved the coun-

try in three essential particulars. It drew it into closer union. Under this influence Franklin proposed his confederacy, the germ of subsequent ones, to the Congress at Albany. It brought the flower of English valor and discipline to train, upon our own soil, the officers and soldiers, who were soon to encounter and overcome it. This was the military school of the Revolution, where Wolfe, Howe, and the veterans of the British army were teachers, and Washington, Putnam, Stark, Gates, Lee, and hosts of others, were pupils. And finally, it issued in the loss by France of her American possessions, and left rankling in the bosom of that proud monarchy, a jealousy of the colonial power of England, which brought her early and effectually to our aid in the subsequent struggle. I might add this same war had its influence in producing the contest itself. For it was the expense growing out of it, the British Parliament made the apology, if not the occasion, of taxing the colonies.

This school of military discipline closed in 1763, and another of civil training succeeded. For the next twelve years the colonists were exercised in the discussion of those fundamental principles, which formed the subject of controversy, and the basis of their rapidly approaching republic. As the sun stood still upon Gibeon, when "the Lord fought for Israel," so now the impending conflict, ever ready to precipitate itself, hung waiting this indispensable preparation. In it Chatham, Burke, and Fox, Otis, the Adamses, Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, and their associates, had not more their conspicuous place, than every village preacher and town meeting leader his

obscure, but not less effective part. The military teachers gave place, while these brilliant expounders of the principles of liberty fortified the heart of the people. This was the autumnal period of the colonies, and these the ripening influences under which they matured to fall from the parent stem.

In fulness of time the conflict opened. Neither leaders nor people yet thought of independence. As late as 1774 and 5, John Adams, who was among the earliest of its advocates, tells us, that, suspected of entertaining such views in the Congress, "he was avoided like a man infected with leprosy," and that he "walked the streets of Philadelphia in solitude, borne down by the weight of care and unpopularity." He has elsewhere said, "that there existed a general desire of independence of the crown in any part of America before the Revolution, is as far from the truth as the zenith from the nadir." Washington expresses the same sentiment in a letter to Capt. McKenzie, and Jefferson, Jay, and Madison all coincide in it. There was a strong attachment on the part of the colonies to the mother country, and a sincere desire to maintain their connection with her. They claimed only to be independent of Parliament. The principle they then asserted, I need not say to Boston school boys, was one recognized for a century in the British Constitution, and well expressed in the Fairfax resolutions, reported by Washington, as "the fundamental principle of the people's being governed by no laws, to which they have not given their consent by representatives freely chosen by themselves." They denied the right of Parliament to

legislate for them, because they were not represented in it.

The character of the right asserted and the time it came into dispute, strikingly combined to bring about independence. To surrender the right was political slavery. To recognize it by conceding a representation in Parliament an assumed impossibility, from the distant situation of the colonies. Science, anticipating its revelations by only half a century, would have resolved the difficulty, and prevented the republic. The application of steam to land and water communication, the railroad and telegraph existing then, as now, would have removed all serious obstacle to a colonial representation in the British House of Commons. Franklin thought it no objection to a confederacy that the most distant representatives might be fifteen or twenty days in reaching the seat of government. We find it none that they come from the other side of a continent. Representatives from any of the old thirteen States could now reach London, more easily and expeditiously, than those from California, Texas, and other distant States do Washington. That resistless power, which to-day lays the nations of Europe and Asia directly beneath the influence of our institutions, developed three-quarters of a century ago, would probably have prevented the severance from England, or at least disabled us from maintaining it.

And yet that was not a period wanting in philosophical inquiry, or an inventive spirit. Franklin drew the lightning from the clouds, but made it not the swift and obedient messenger of man. Watt and Bolton brought

the steam engine to toil and spin. But no Fulton rose, with his genius, unconsciously to sacrifice or retard the liberty of his country. The first half of the nineteenth century gave us the steamboat and railroad to develop our resources and cement our union. While it was not till the sixty-third anniversary of the battle of Bunker Hill, that the simultaneous arrival of the Great Western and Sirius at New York, solved the problem of ocean steam navigation, and laid England and America side by side in peaceful and prosperous intercourse.

A series of causes, equally providential and curious, preserved and augmented that distrust and suspicion on the part of the British Cabinet, which with their national pride, and ignorance of our strength and resources, prevented their conceding all legislation to the colonial assemblies. The present prime minister of England, almost within a twelve month, has declared in the House of Commons, "that it was not a single error or a single blunder that got" England "into that contest, but a series of repeated errors and repeated blunders." It is worthy of notice also, that the British government concedes to its present American colonies quite all its former ones claimed, at the commencement of the struggle. Most happily for mankind other counsels and another temper then prevailed.

Under these, while the experience and wisdom of Chat-ham were counselling, and the fervid eloquence of Burke enforcing, conciliation; while the Congress were petition-ing for redress, and the infatuation and obstinacy of min-isters demanding unconditional submission, the conflict at

Lexington and Concord opened the war. This, it has been truly said, "was one of those great days, one of those elemental occasions when the people rise and act for themselves." It was planned and directed by no revolutionary leader. It came accidentally, if you please so to say, but like many events, which preceded and followed it, not precipitated, hardly anticipated, by leaders, bearing them on to a future they did not yet discern. The organization of the army, and the Declaration of Independence necessarily resulted from it. It was not so much that the day of conciliation had gone by, for in the counsels of Infinite wisdom, it never had any day. Redress of grievances, and colonial rights under the British Constitution were no longer sought. The larger designs of Providence revealed themselves, and fearlessly the men we honor followed their guiding light. The simple and sublime fact was, "in the course of human events it had become necessary for one people to dissolve the political bonds, which " had "connected them with another, and to assume, among the powers of the earth, that separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature's God entitle them." No sooner did this grand necessity develop itself, than true to principle, true to liberty, true to the present and the future, true to themselves, the fathers of the republic, "with a firm reliance on the protection of Divine Providence," pledged to it their lives, their fortunes, and their sacred honor.

Seven long and weary years of war, with all their often repeated and familiar sufferings and trials, followed in vindication and support of this now declared necessity.

This protracted contest had its special and obvious purpose. It has been asserted that the Revolutionary war was unnecessary. It has even been pronounced, by some ultra advocates of peace, criminal. It is said the colonies in the inevitable course of events, would quite as soon have obtained their freedom, without, as with it. I do not stop to argue upon this point. Certainly the experience of Canada, Nova Scotia, and New Brunswick does not very forcibly support the theory. In my apprehension, the ultimate design of the war goes altogether beyond the then present sustaining of the liberties of the country, and consists, in preparing for their continual support, an united and efficient general government.

The Revolutionary War was just as indispensable to the formation of our union, as the severance of the colonies from England. Had the counsels of Pitt and Burke prevailed, this separation might not have occurred. Had those of Dean Tucker been followed, and America allowed to fall off from Great Britain, as the ripe fruit falls from the tree, it might have been equally disastrous to her. Undoubtedly, independent of the war, the States had the same strong and enduring interests to bring them together, that they now have to keep them so. Still the advantages were prospective, and untested by experience; the difficulties and jealousies present and active. We have lived under the present Union sixty years, and for all that time, recognized its sovereignty, and called it our country. We have looked at and loved it from other lands, in the far distance, when its stars could be no longer distinguished, and rejoiced that together they sent

a cheering light, where that of no single star could ever reach. We have traversed it at home, and felt a conscious pride that no State lines severed us from our country ; that, wherever we were, from centre to circumference, by prairie and river, by lake and ocean, on whatever extremity, we placed our hand, we felt the ceaseless pulsations of the same life giving heart. We have realized its protection and blessedness in every nerve and fibre of our political being. For seventy-five years we have celebrated this, its anniversary, and pronounced upon it a grateful people's benediction.

Far otherwise was it with the colonies, standing on the threshold of national existence. Throwing off British allegiance, they knew no sovereignty but their own, and they guarded it with natural and ceaseless vigilance. The loftiest faith of that day fell far short of the experience of this. The uncertain light of the future, magnified objects of distrust and fear, and no rays came from the past to correct the error. Conscious that their liberties were assailed by their brethren on one side of the ocean, they were mutually cautious of entrusting them to those on the other. It was under the stringent pressure of a common cause and danger, that Patrick Henry so nobly declared "the distinctions between Virginians, Pennsylvanians, New Yorkers and New Englanders, are no more. I am not a Virginian, but an American." It was the probability of being compelled to maintain their rights by union and force, that originated the first Congresses. After the discipline of the seven years war, and the disastrous condition in which it left the country, it was not

without difficulties, seeming at times insuperable, that the present constitution was secured. Without the absolute necessity for alliance, caused by the war; without the sympathy the common peril induced; without the friendly ties and mutual confidence, the preliminary union, and the mingling of North and South in council and field, originated and inspired; who can say when and how our present confederacy would have existed? There are no accidents, nor unnecessary wastes of blood and life, under the government of Heaven. And such was not the American Revolution, protracted in darkness, doubt, and almost despair, for seven eventful years. During all this time it was silently and effectively disposing the several elements of the future republic to their respective places, and when it had accomplished this work, its pressure was removed. Ceasing it left thirteen Commonwealths, independent of foreign control, partially confederated, and taught, by happy experience, the feasibility, the necessity, the advantage, the pleasure and pride even of union. It left, too, behind it, a heritage of glory, achieved on many a field, attaching to the whole country, and incapable of division. Lexington and Saratoga, Bunker Hill and Yorktown, and "all the hard fought fields of the war," belonged, then as now, to no State, and admitted of no apportionment.

But beyond these more permanent influences, it created a debt, and the necessity of sustaining the public credit by discharging it, was a leading one, among the immediate causes, which substituted the present constitution for the old confederacy.

Thus, the external pressures and internal resistances, the centralizing and separating forces, were so adjusted as to produce the government essential to the largest interests of liberty. To this end it must be powerful as well as free. Power required extent of territory and population, and variety of climate, production and men. These elements existed, and brought into being with them, varieties of interests, feelings, and institutions. To place them in all their relations, under a single Commonwealth was impracticable. History tells the fate of such republics. Thus consolidated our own would perish in a day. Every extension would endanger, every sectional peculiarity shake it. While detached from the confederacy, the largest of our states would neither secure respect at home, nor character abroad. Hence the system of beauty and strength, which accumulates unities in a federal centre, and leaves diversities to state sovereignties ; combines union for general and common interests, separation for local and peculiar ; one for greatness and influence abroad, many for peace and harmony at home.

The accomplishment of this system, as we behold it, was the crowning work of the extended series. Its time and manner were as opportune as those of the Revolutionary contest. With all the beneficent experience of our union to aid him, he would be a bold projector, who should attempt to bring together, into the present confederacy, the thirty-one states from California to Maine. And yet how successfully it has been brought about. The original states were comparatively few in number, and all upon the Atlantic coast. They were enough to

begin an influential government, and capable, as results had shown, of resisting foreign aggression. At the same time, they were, to a much greater extent than the thirty-one now are, homogeneous in their character, and identical in their interests and pursuits. They were agricultural and commercial. The growth of cotton, and the introduction of manufactures, both of which have contributed so largely to our material prosperity, but both of which have created and perpetuated great local interests, had not then commenced. The cultivation of this important staple at the south, for use and export, did not begin till after the adoption of the Constitution. Whitney invented the cotton gin in 1792, and Slater built the first cotton factory in New England in 1790. The views and feelings, north and south, in regard to slavery were more modified and harmonious, and the institution itself less sectional than now.

At this favoring moment, and with all these favoring circumstances, the Constitution not without the utmost difficulty was established over a few existing states, and left by its silent and faithful working, to become ruler over many. This was the providential mode of reaching the ultimate end. Much as I venerate and honor the framers of the Constitution, I believe they had no adequate idea of the extent of territory and people over which it has and will operate, or of the self-extending power incorporated within it. They were engaged to frame a government for the then states, and such as should be formed out of territories belonging to them, or the confederacy. The moulding exigencies of the time

made that the best for them, which was precisely adapted to every subsequent emergency. Formed for the Atlantic coast, in its onward stretch over mountain and river, in a single lifetime, it has embraced the breadth of a continent. The first swoop of our Eagle's wing brought it the territory of Louisiana. And exceedingly interesting and instructive, in the view I am regarding our history, are the circumstances attending this purchase. The acquisition of Florida followed. And our day has beheld the marvellous one of Texas and California. Who, fathoming the grand design of Omnipotence, discerned in the incipient, or more mature measures for the independence and annexation of Texas, the preliminaries for planting our republic, in the broadest freedom, on the shores of the Pacific ? What, but a vision from Heaven, could have persuaded our fathers that they were framing a constitution for the unexplored north-west coast, and the long dormant regions of Spanish discovery ? What eye, but the Omniscient foresaw, that many, who rejoiced, when this same constitution was adopted, should live to see their sons gathering the mineral wealth of those distant lands, beneath its protecting flag, themselves the last glittering star set upon its radiant folds ? At the Declaration of Independence, what prophetic voice could have impressed upon its Signers, that they were consecrating a day, which seventy-five years after, a great Commonwealth, rich as Mexico or Peru, should celebrate as *their* national jubilee, where the indomitable Society of Jesus were just then planting their early missions ? Who supposed, till "coming events cast their shadows before," while we sought to penetrate

Asia from the east, Providence would backward turn our steps, and on the Western Ocean, front us with the teeming millions beyond its peaceful waters ?

And yet all this by unexpected agencies, and the elasticity and adaptation of our Constitution, has been accomplished in the period of a single life. More than doubling its constituent states, extending its population with unexampled rapidity, vastly multiplying and diversifying its interests, opening itself an asylum to all nations and people, with its happily adjusted powers, our republic develops no element of weakness or decay. Laved by the waters, and fanned by the breezes of two oceans, it only gathers strength and vigor. Extended as it is, the progress of science and invention has reduced it to its original compactness. You may travel from side to side of it with more rapidity and ease than in the days of Washington. A few moments, almost, diffuse intelligence from centre to circumference. Seated in its capital, on the evening of a Presidential election, you may gather in the rapid hours of the night, as from vast radiating galleries, the calm, but mighty expression of its people's voice, and before the first beams of morning, record their indisputable decision. A chain of great lakes and navigable rivers intersect it with their zigzag courses, as if designed by God himself to bind together a common country. A constantly increasing net work of railways carries on a ceaseless intermingling of the population. The mails with their precious burdens traverse every thoroughfare, and thread every highway and byway. Christian benevolence follows close upon the track of

the pioneer, and plants beside his humble dwelling the church and school.

With such a constitution to control a country thus compressed and developed, I have no sympathy with fears for its extension. Whether it has yet reached its ultimate limit is questionable. Its territory may at no distant day encircle the Gulf of Mexico, and its banner once unfurled in conflict at Chippewa, again, by the results of peace, float there in permanency, descend lake and river, wave over the scene of Wolfe's glory and death, and finally guard the outlet of the St. Lawrence, as it does that of the Mississippi, the Rio Grande and the golden Sacramento.

These are speculations into which I do not enter. I have traced the familiar events of our history, and sought to show that a superintending Providence has shaped and directed them to a manifest end. I have done so that from it I might draw two inferences ; one of duty, and the other of hope.

We hear much in these days of a "higher law." I recognize its existence, and reverently bow before its manifestations. I present our Union as a striking monument of its moulding and guiding Omnipotence. I have desired to enhance the value of the magnificent structure, by exhibiting in it the hand of the Divine Builder. I have endeavored to show that this "higher law," by a series of concurring events, reaching back through centuries, has elaborated and evolved this successful experiment of human liberty. Thus originated, I claim for it the holiest sanctions of this law, I demand for it the support of its

solemn obligations. The union of these States has been accomplished by the contributions of nations and centuries, for no transient or insignificant purpose. In its sublime and ultimate end it has a mission to humanity. In the language of Washington, "the preservation of the sacred fire of liberty, and the destiny of the republican model of government are justly considered as deeply, perhaps, as finally, staked on the experiment entrusted to the hands of the American people." Thus, as Madison has truly said, are we "responsible for the greatest trust ever confided to a political society." Ours is not the duty of forming, but preserving. The fathers were faithful to every exigency, by which God created it; we are responsible for a like faithfulness to every exigency, by which He would preserve and perpetuate it. To such fidelity the past urges, the future calls, and the Highest Law commands us. Evils and defects within our Union we may well and earnestly seek to remove, by the development and operation of the principles upon which it rests. But, whosoever lays his hand upon the fabric itself, or seeks by whatever means, or under whatever pretence, or from whatever source, to undermine its foundations, is treacherous to humanity, false to liberty, and more than all, culpable to God.

This is the inference of duty. To its performance hope, by its smile, encourages us. All efforts for the dissolution of our Union will be as disastrously unsuccessful as they are singularly criminal. Never in its existence has it been more earnestly and truly performing its appropriate work than now. A people in the aggregate,

happy and blessed as the sun shines upon, repose in its protection. Every rolling tide brings to its shores multitudes, seeking its shelter. Each receding wave carries back to the people they have left, its liberalizing influence. Rising midway of the continent, and reaching to either ocean, it throws over both its radiant and cheering light. Intently the struggling nations contemplate its no longer doubtful experiment. Moral and religious truth are penetrating every part of its vast domain, and planting in the very footsteps of the first settlers, the church, the school, and the college. Its christian missionaries have girdled the globe with their stations, and in all of them heroic men and women, under its protection, with the religion of Jesus, are silently diffusing the principles of American liberty. Already a nation in the far off Islands of the Pacific, has been redeemed by them from barbarism, assumed its place among the powers of the earth, and the very last mails tell us, is at this moment seeking admission to our republic.

Thus meeting its grand purposes, it will not fall. Man alone has not reared it, the tabernacle of freedom, and man alone cannot prostrate it, or gently beam by beam take it down. Heaven directed in its formation and growth, while true to its origin, it will be heaven-protected in its progress and maturity. The stars of God will shine down kindly upon it, and angels on the beats of their silvery wings will linger and hover above it. To-day it is as firmly seated as ever in the affections of its citizens. Guarded by its hardly seen power, reposing in its prosperity, not stopping to contemplate the

character of its origin, or to realize its transcendent purpose, men, for a moment, may cast its value, speculate on its duration, and even threaten its dissolution. In the administration of its affairs conflicts of opinion will exist, sectional interests will become excited, and sometimes hostile. The views of ardent men will be maintained with the ardor in which they are held. A clear and fair field of combat will be left to error and truth. The largest freedom of discussion will be scrupulously preserved. In the consequent excitement there may sometimes seem to be danger to the Union itself. But in the hour of peril experience shows, and ever will show, that a whole people will rally to its support, and sink its foes beneath a weight of odium a lifetime cannot alleviate. The rain may descend, the floods come, and the winds blow and beat upon it, it will not fall, for it is founded upon a rock. It rests upon guaranties stronger even than laws and compromises. For it our interests combine in overwhelming potency; around it cluster the most glorious associations of our history; in it the hopes of humanity are involved; to it our hearts cling with undying love; for it religion, liberty, and conscience plead; and beyond all, upon it, in its riper years as in its infancy, the protection of God rests, a sheltering cloud for its fiercer day, a pillar of fire in its darker night.





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